

Closing The Nutrition Gap: Why Now Is The Time To Overcome Your Barriers To A Larger Nutrition Practice

The 2012 Nutrition Review

by Vicki Nuber

What is getting in the way of your having a larger nutrition practice? And is now a good time to grow your patients' interest in how you can help them with nutrition? In this month's review we gathered together a group of nutrition experts to find out what they know about the profession on the ground. The insights they have may just give you the inspiration you need to take your nutrition practice to the next level. Whether that means introducing nutrition for the first time, or expanding on your established protocols, there is something here for everyone.

Let us begin with the most important question of all. Is now a good time for you to make nutrition a larger priority in your clinic? The experts offer us a resounding yes. Of all the barriers you may face to growing a nutrition practice, a lack of interest in nutrition is not one of them. While some doctors do not want to sell nutrition, and therefore do not offer it, many chiropractors find that nutrition already sells itself because patients are already accustomed to buying nutritional supplementation.

The 7 Systems Of Nutritional Practice

From hundreds of adjunct products and therapies, to hundreds of named chiropractic adjusting techniques, one thing chiropractors don't suffer from is a lack of choice when taking care of patients.

So it goes with the nutritional chiropractic practice, where the varieties of opinions means there are multiple ways to do nutrition in one's practice. In fact, confusion is another barrier that chiropractors face when trying to grow their nutrition practice.

Which is the right way to do nutrition? Perhaps the best answer to this question is the style of nutrition practice that helps you help more people efficiently and effectively. And that means keeping things as simple as you can.

Because nutritional pathways are involved in so many human biological functions, almost every nutritional expert and practitioner has their favorite

go-to nutrition tests, supplements, and short-cuts to helping their clients as quickly as possible.

Almost all nutrition experts will tend to focus on one of the body's major systems over and above the rest. The following are the common pathways that nutrition experts choose. Understanding which systems your nutrition company or consultant tends to emphasize can help you simplify the learning process.

Gap Fillers: These nutritionists know the top common nutrient deficiencies caused by modern farming, poor food choices, and an over-reliance on prescription drugs. Rather than addressing a single system, they help patients fill the nutritional gap their lifestyle creates with general nutritional advice and supplementation.

Intestinal/Gut Experts: These practitioners are concerned with the

Amount Per Serving	As Packaged
Calories	190
Calories from Fat	0
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	
Trans Fat 0g	0%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 0mg	14%
Total Carbohydrate 43g	0%
Dietary Fiber 0g	
Sugars 0g	8%
Protein 4g	
Vitamin A 0%	Vitamin C 0%
Calcium 2%	Iron 8%
Thiamine 15%	Niacin 10%
	Folic Acid 20%



The market is ready for your message of nutrition

Economic data on the nutrition supplement industry shows that Americans are spending more money on supplements every year. Dollars spent on supplements passed the \$20 billion mark in 2004, and climbed to \$28.7 billion in 2010. Even as spending of discretionary income slowed to a crawl in most areas of the economy, the nutritional supplement industry continued to grow.

Shoppers are largely consuming supplements without the input of a health care provider. These economic numbers include expenditures on

intimate relationship between the large nervous system of the digestive track (the Enteric system) and the central nervous system. They tend to see most chronic health problems, especially immune system issues, as coming from the gut. While all nutrition pathways are concerned about food and food quality, gut health nutritionists always start with the digestive tract.

Hormone Doctors: These experts focus on the endocrine system, especially what is known as the neuro-endocrine axis (the mutual influence that the nervous system and hormone systems have on each other). These doctors track hormone levels with the intent to balance hormone levels that are in chaos. Everything that they do, whether they are working with the gut or with the body's energy systems, is meant to restore normal hormone levels.

Thyroid/Energy Boosters: The energy experts tend to see a lot of chronic disease

everything from organic, non-synthetic vitamins to the laboratory concoctions that college boys drink to enhance their focus during workouts. GNC has taken the largest portion of the market share in recent years, showing that most Americans go shopping for supplements with little input from a licensed health care provider.

Chiropractors only need to integrate nutrition into their practice to help guide this natural interest in supplementation. Selling may not even be necessary. "Don't ever 'sell' nutrition," said Dr. Dick Versendaal of VerVita Products. "That's what grocery stores and health food stores

as a consequence of thyroid fatigue and adrenal exhaustion (sympathetic overdrive). They understand that most of our culture is operating on only fumes instead of a full tank of gas, and that leads to bad habits in nutrition. These practitioners emphasize the importance of naturally resetting the body's energy systems so that the recuperative powers of the body are at their highest.

Bone, Muscle, and Joint Supporters: These nutritionists emphasize supporting the work of the human muscle and skeletal systems in adjunct to their chiropractic care. Their nutritional recommendations are usually general to the demographic profile of the patient in front of them.

Anti-inflammation Gurus: Believing that the grain-based, modern Western diet causes chronic disease via chronic inflammation, anti-inflammation experts emphasize nutrition and supplements that fight inflammation. Eliminating

do." With almost \$30 billions dollars spent, there is no question that your patients are already buying supplementation in one form or another. It is safe to say that more Americans are already convinced of the importance of taking some sort of supplementation in their lifestyle than they are the importance of receiving chiropractic adjustments. With a relative lack of medical doctors interested in nutrition, and a shortage of doctors of naturopathy, chiropractors have a unique opportunity to close the nutrition gap, and grow their influence.

"The supplement field continues to expand and become increasingly

food sources that cause over-inflammation in the body is always the first step to reducing pain and to supporting organ function.

Detoxification Doctors: While all nutrition experts incorporate some aspect of detoxification, the detoxification practitioners have all of their clients start with a specific detoxification protocol. In fact, these experts may use multiple protocols based on the patient's profile, the organ systems involved, and suspicion of exposure to toxins.

Are there other ways to simplify nutrition? Absolutely. Do practitioners sometimes mix-and-match their emphasis based on needs of the individual patient? Yes, of course. But understanding these common ways of simplifying nutritional practice can help you understand both your options in nutrition products and the perspective of nutritional consultants that will be guiding the growth of your nutrition practice.

complex to the average consumer," said Connie Falkenstein of UAS Laboratories. "They begin to turn to professionals with expertise in the field to make their choices. Chiropractors, as leading alternative health practitioners, are well positioned to offer this advice."

"I believe chiropractors are the perfect outlet for clinical nutrition," said Jim Chapman of Nutra Research. "It matches their underlying values and beliefs toward an active, healthy lifestyle." Dr. Donald Hayes of Greens FIRST added, "Patients are already spending millions of dollars on nutrition. If chiropractors offered a unique product that supports their treatment plan, they would be pleasantly surprised to see that patients not only will buy it, but they will buy it month after month."

You are ready for insurance independence

The market is ready, and is used to paying cash, and for many doctors that is the primary economic reason they look to nutrition. "There is an increased interest in a cash practice and more frustration with insurance companies," said Chapman. The interest that consumers have in nutritional supplementation means doctors may be able to establish a more wellness oriented practice, around the cyclical purchasing of supplements. Nutrition is a practice complement that helps continue the chiropractic relationship, even after the patient has found the relief and functional improvements they were seeking.

"The patients' demands are growing towards natural healing methods and they are becoming aware that many chiropractors are incorporating natural healing methods in their practice," said Dr. Theresa Dale of Dr. Dale's Wellness Center. "Patients will pay cash to get the

correct treatment."

In terms of raw economic power, the nutritional supplement industry is large and offers doctors a new avenue for engaging their practice and their community. So if lack of interest in nutritional supplements is not the barrier to a larger nutrition practice, what are those barriers?

Common nutrition barrier #1:

No time

Just because Americans spend billions annually on supplements does not mean you can automatically move as much product as GNC. Everyone from mom-and-pop nutrition stores to the supplement chains in strip malls spend a good deal of time tracking inventory, doing research on products, and answering any questions customers might have. "It is hard for the chiropractor to find time to explain why a patient should take a nutritional supplement and answer questions regarding dosage and best time for consuming the products," said Eleanor Barrager of Biogenesis Nutraceuticals. "Chiropractors make more money doing adjustments than they do explaining the usefulness of a supplement and how to dose it."

For many doctors the ability to turn a greater profit doing more adjustments is always going to overcome

their interest in expanding into nutrition. Barrager says that chiropractors need software to help them make supplement recommendations, give instructions for consumption for patients, and to track their sales and sales tax. Without automating certain aspects of the nutrition practice, growing the nutrition side of your practice may be too time consuming to offer a real return on investment.

Is there another solution besides relying on software? Unless you are going to work exclusively on nutrition in your practice, having a trained office member may be the best solution for taking the pressure off. While the doctor should be making the recommendations, there is nothing wrong with one of your staff members filling in the details and answering common questions about how and when to use a supplement. Expanding your nutrition practice may mean expanding the education of one of your current staff members, or even adding a new person to your team. If you are truly interested in growing nutrition, but do not want to add more practice hours to your day, then help with nutrition should be able to pay for itself.

Common nutrition barrier #2: Intimidated by inventory

Many practices have found that

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The first and most obvious is to simply keep no or minimal inventory. The only nutritional supplements that come through your practice are those that are already ordered and sold for patients.

keeping popular supplements for on-hand inventory facilitates growth of a nutrition practice. Patients engage in passive consumption of the products that they recognize. Inventory also helps facilitate the patients' acceptance of recommended protocols by placing the nutrition in their hands on the day it is recommended.

The cost of acquiring an in-office inventory, however, can be a barrier to many. Especially for those doctors who have a diverse set of products that they like and recommend. "Learning how to appropriately use nutrition along with the high cost of maintaining an inventory of potentially hundreds of different products is overwhelming to most chiroprac-

tors," said Dr. Dick Versendaal of VerVita Products.

What are some ways for you to overcome the barrier of inventory costs? There are several effective strategies. The first and most obvious is to simply keep no or minimal inventory. The only nutritional supplements that come through your practice are those that are already ordered and sold for patients. You can keep empty or nearly empty bottles of your most common recommendations for visual reference and display. It may not be as effective as a wall of product ready for sale, but it will contain the overhead associated with keeping products that can spoil.

The second is to simplify your offerings by choosing products that combine common nutritional pairings together. While this may not be the ideal for advanced nutritional protocols, it may be perfect for practices

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that are simply trying to fill the common gaps in their patients' nutrition. While it might seem counter-intuitive, Dr. Dick Versendaal believes that the best way to grow the size of your nutrition practice is to simplify it and even reduce the number of products you offer. By keeping it simple, doctors can help a majority of patients with common deficiencies, while saving time.

Common nutrition barrier #3: The learning curve

Perhaps the most intimidating aspect of the nutrition practice is the extra education that most doctors want before they start making more in-depth nutrition recommendations. While this interest is noble and responsible, it can also stop knowledgeable clinicians from helping their patients with the knowledge that they already have. For example, a patient with allergies may benefit from a detoxification regimen. However they could also benefit from just trying to give up dairy for a short time to see if that helps. In which case, your nutritional advice may simply be "avoid dairy."

"Education, more than anything, is a barrier to getting involved in nutrition," said James Doherty of Innate Response. "The first step in this process is to start with gaps in the diet. By learning what is in a patient's diet, a chiropractor can step beyond multiple vitamins and into 'supportive nutrients' such as Vitamin C, D, antioxidants, green foods, and enzymes."

Underlying this desire for more knowledge is the unspoken barrier that many doctors have: what if it does not work? "Like medications and invasive treatments, nutritional supplements will not always provide outcomes that meet expectations," said Jim Chapman of Nutra

Research. "The uncontrollable variables of an underlying condition from patient to patient, coupled without an absolute 'guarantee' of success, often makes a DC hesitant to promote a nutrition solution."

The desire for more education can help doctors find supplements they love and promote in good conscience, but it can also be a barrier to growth. This is especially so in a busy chiropractic practice where it is easy to shove the next nutritional seminar behind the more immediate needs of the practice. Doctors should recognize that sometimes the desire for more nutritional education is really just a lack of clinical confidence in disguise. Yes, it is a lack of confidence that can be overcome by taking another seminar. But it may also be overcome simply by learning while doing.

Luckily, many nutrition companies understand that a "learning while doing" approach is the only way many chiropractors can expand their nutrition practice. Most companies that serve chiropractors will offer multiple ways to get help from peer nutrition consultants. At the very least they will offer advice and research on various products in their line, from which doctors can draw their own conclusions. Keep in mind, your educational needs will depend on your level of objective testing, and the degree to which you want to customize your protocols

based on individual patient need. Sometimes the easiest way to grow your nutrition practice is to do more of the basics (filling in the nutrition gaps) for more patients.

Bridge the gap

According to the data on the nutritional supplement industry, there is no time better than now to expand your nutrition practice. Americans are spending about \$30 billion a year on products that are largely sold by big box stores and GNC-like retailers, without any real advice from a health care provider. Accustomed to paying cash for supplements, your community has already been conditioned to not expect insurance coverage for nutritional solutions. Therefore many doctors see it as the perfect place to gain some independence from third party payers.

With the right solutions to the common barriers, you can bridge the gaps in quality nutrition and nutritional advice for hundreds, if not thousands of patients in your community. Like any other aspect of practice, use your time and money wisely and get advice from people you trust to grow your nutrition practice, from where it is now, to where you want it to be. Even a tiny portion of over \$28 billion is larger than you may think.

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